



## **USAID Marks Closing of Business and Trade Development Program with Launch of Informoney Website and Expansion of Authentic Bulgaria Initiative**

Sofia – October 1, 2007

The Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance Business and Trade Development Program (VEGA/BTD) sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is marking its successful completion after more than three years of supporting Bulgaria's business development through technical assistance and trade facilitation activities and promotion of international linkages in industry sectors with high growth potential.

**Media are invited to attend the event to celebrate the success of the program in the Grand Hotel Sofia on Tuesday, October 2 at 18. 30h.**

The event will focus on two recent initiatives of the project, the launch of the informational site Informoney SME Clearinghouse and the expansion of hotels participating in the Authentic Bulgaria Quality Mark. USAID Mission Director Michael Fritz will speak at the event, which will bring together representatives of government agencies, donor organizations, banks, SMEs, and non-government organizations.

### **Informoney**

The overarching goal of Informoney website ([www.informoney.org](http://www.informoney.org)) is to provide improved access to financing and business/ technical expertise to support further development and growth of the SME sector in Bulgaria. Its key components feature a searchable and comparable database of financing products enabling real-time access to current and detailed financing program information based on specified criteria; comprehensive consulting and business start-up services, provided by a pool of experts associated with the portal; a knowledge center provides links to definitions of various business and finance terminology, best-practices business templates, key business information and relevant news; a library; a FAQ file; and a forum for the exchange of ideas between portal users.

### **Authentic Bulgaria**

Authentic Bulgaria ([www.authenticbulgaria.org](http://www.authenticbulgaria.org)) is an independent quality mark in tourism awarded to accommodations that offer original and unique tourism product. The program started in May 2006 and was initiated by the tourism industry. It is designed to help smaller hospitality and tourism providers to develop better tourism products and attract high value tourists, as opposed to offering the mass-market tourist services common in Bulgaria. The newly established Authentic Bulgaria Association will continue the project after completion of VEGA/ BTD activities in Bulgaria.

*For more information, please, contact:*

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